AMAR CHITRA KATHA

HIUEN TSANG

A BUDDHIST PILGRIM FROM CHINA

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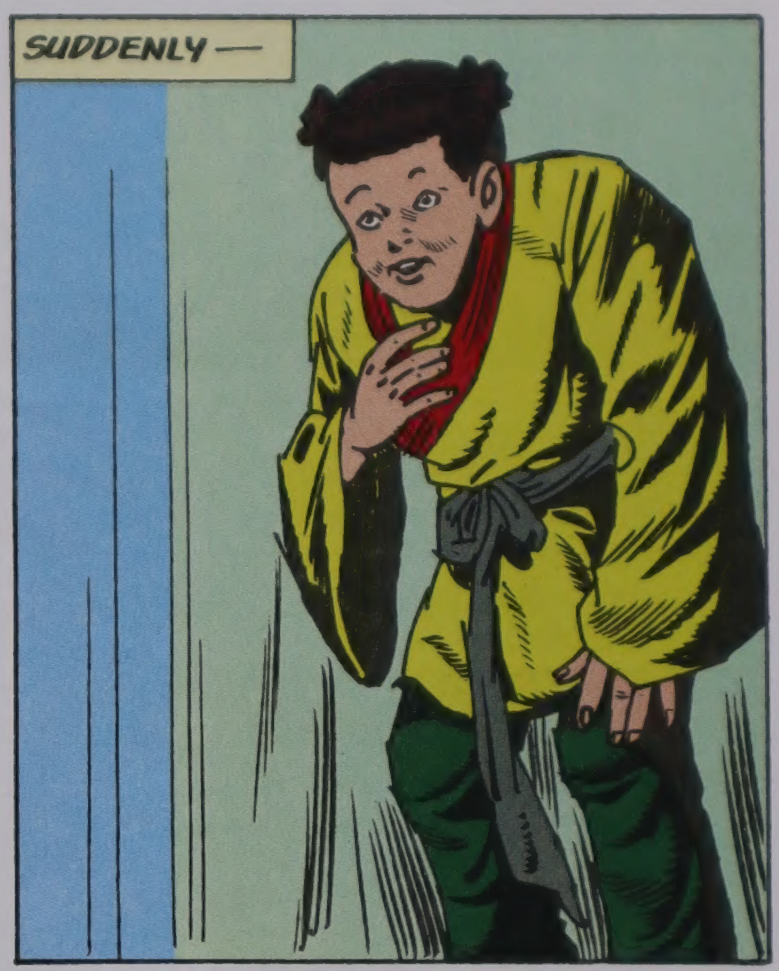
HIUEN TSANG

IN LOYANG, CHINA, A LEARNED MAN GAVE LESSONS IN FILIAL PIETY TO HIS SON, HIUEN TSANG.



BLESS YOU, MY SON. YOU WILL CERTAINLY BE A GREAT MAN ONE DAY.
I SHALL TRY MY BEST, FATHER, TO FULFIL YOUR HOPES. I SHALL STUDY THE LAW OF THE BUDDHA*

* BUDDHIST RELIGION OR DHARMA

HIUEN TSANG WAS A CHILD GIFTED WITH A KEEN MIND AND AN EXCELLENT MEMORY. WHEN HE WAS THIRTEEN —

WHAT IS THAT CHILD RECITING TO THE LEARNED ASSEMBLY?

THE MAHAYANA SUTRA. HOW PROFOUND IS HIS KNOWLEDGE!

BUT... BUT... I READ IT OUT TO HIM ONLY YESTERDAY!

AH, THAT CHILD IS A PRODIGY OF LEARNING. HE WILL SURELY RISE TO FAME.

AT THIS TIME POLITICAL UNREST, RIOTS AND FAMINE WERE RIFE IN THE LAND. HIUEN TSANG, ALONG WITH HIS BROTHER, FLED TO CH'ANG-AN.

AT THE AGE OF TWENTY HE WAS ALREADY A LEARNED SCHOLAR. BUT THEN —

AFTER READING EVERY AVAILABLE TEXT AND AFTER DISCUSSIONS WITH EVERY KNOWN SCHOLAR, I STILL DO NOT KNOW THE TRUTH. I WONDER WHETHER I SHOULD GO ABROAD AND LEARN FURTHER.

LATER —

I AM GOING WEST TO SEEK THE LAW. THERE IS NO OTHER WAY FOR ME TO RESOLVE MY DOUBTS.

BUT, O MASTER OF THE LAW, THE KING HAS FORBIDDEN TRAVEL OUTSIDE THE COUNTRY.

OH HE HAS, HAS HE? WELL, I'LL FIND A WAY OUT.

THAT NIGHT HIUEN TSANG LEFT HOME.

HE ARRIVED IN A DESERT THAT DECEIVED HIM WITH ITS MIRAGES AND OTHER PHENOMENA.

NO GUIDE, THE HORSE DEAD, WILDERNESS ALL AROUND... HOW WILL I EVER GET THROUGH?

HE TRUDGED ON RESOLUTELY AHEAD. SUDDENLY —

DON'T SHOOT ME, I'M A PRIEST FROM THE CAPITAL, GOING ON A PILGRIMAGE.

THE ASSAILANTS CAME FORWARD. THEY WERE THE ROYAL GUARDS. THEY TOOK HIUEN TSANG TO THEIR COMMANDER.

SIR, THE WESTERN ROAD IS LONG AND PERILOUS. DO NOT GO.

YOU CAN'T STOP ME, I WISH TO KNOW THE TRUTH REGARDING THE WORD OF THE BUDDHA AND I WILL SURMOUNT ALL OBSTACLES IN FINDING IT. IF YOU WISH TO DETAIN ME, YOU MAY AS WELL...

...KILL ME, SINCE I DO NOT WISH TO GO BACK WITHOUT HAVING ATTAINED MY GOAL.

I AM FORTUNATE TO HAVE MET YOU, O MASTER. I SHALL PROVIDE FOR YOUR NEEDS DURING THE JOURNEY.

HIUEN TSANG TRAVELLED THROUGH AN UTTERLY DESOLATE DESERT FULL OF HAZARDS.

THERE WAS NEITHER FOOD NOR WATER. EXHAUSTED AND DELIRIOUS, HE FELL ON HIS KNEES IN BLIND DESPAIR.

O BODHISATTVA! I SEEK NO RICHES OR WORLDLY PROFIT. MY HEART LONGS TO FIND THE TRUTH. HELP ME!

JUST THEN—

WHERE IS THIS COOL BREEZE COMING FROM? IT SEEMS TO HAVE PUT A NEW LIFE INTO ME. THE HORSE LOOKS REFRESHED, TOO.

HIUEN TSANG THEN MOUNTED THE HORSE TO GO IN THE DIRECTION OF THE BREEZE. AS IF IN A TRANCE, THE HORSE LED HIM TO AN OASIS.

HIUEN TSANG FILLED UP HIS WATER BAG AND CONTINUED HIS JOURNEY. ON REACHING THE ROYAL CITY OF TURFAN, HE WAS TAKEN TO THE RULER.

I AM HONOURED, O MASTER, BY YOUR VISIT. I WOULD LIKE YOU TO STAY HERE FOR EVER.

NO, O KING, I SEEK THE LAW OF THE BUDDHA AND MUST PROCEED WEST-WARDS.

PEOPLE IN MY KINGDOM ARE IGNORANT OF THE LAW. YOU ARE A LEARNED SCHOLAR. WHY DON'T YOU STAY HERE AND REFORM THEM?

HOW CAN I DO THAT WITHOUT KNOWING THE TRUTH FIRST?

OH, SO YOU INSIST. ALL RIGHT, I HAVE MY METHODS. GUARDS!

KEEP HIM UNDER STRICT SURVEILLANCE. BUT SEE TO IT THAT HE HAS NO DISCOMFORT.

YOU CHOOSE TO OPPOSE ME, O KING. REMEMBER, YOU HAVE POWER ONLY OVER MY BODY BUT NONE OVER MY SOUL!

THE KING OFFERED THE CHOICEST FOOD TO HIUEN TSANG, BUT THE PRISONER NEITHER ATE NOR DRANK.

AFTER THREE DAYS, AS HIUEN TSANG GREW FAINT , THE RULER OF TURFAN WAS ALARMED.

I PERMIT YOU TO GO WEST, O MASTER! I PRAY YOU TAKE A FRUGAL MORNING MEAL.

AS YOU WISH, O KING.

HIUEN TSANG'S DETERMINATION HAD WON OVER THE KING. HE CONSENTED TO EAT, TO THE GREAT RELIEF OF THE KING.

O MASTER, IN MY HUMBLE WAY I HAVE PROVIDED FOR YOUR FURTHER JOURNEY. HERE ARE LETTERS OF INTRODUCTION TO THE TWENTY KINGDOMS OF THE WEST.

MY SINCERE GRATITUDE, O KING. I SHALL NEVER FORGET THIS FAVOUR.

HIUEN TSANG WAS NO LONGER A FUGITIVE, BUT AN ACCREDITED PILGRIM WITH OFFICIAL STANDING.

PASSING NUMEROUS LANDS, HE CAME TO MEET THE TURKISH KHAN.

THE KHAN OFFERED HIM FOOD AND URGED —

I AM WAITING EAGERLY FOR YOU TO EXPOUND THE DOCTRINE OF THE BUDDHA, O MASTER.

VERY WELL, I SHALL TELL YOU ABOUT LOVE OF PRESERVING LIFE AND THE FINAL DELIVERANCE.

THE DISCOURSE WENT ON FOR SEVERAL DAYS. FINALLY —

I MUST TAKE YOUR LEAVE NOW, O KHAN.

WHAT, YOU ARE GOING? DON'T, I BESEECH YOU. THE LAND YOU WISH TO GO TO...

...MEN THERE ARE NAKED AND BLACK, WITHOUT ANY SENSE OF DECORUM, NOR ARE THEY FIT TO LOOK AT!

I SEEK THE LAW OF THE BUDDHA, O KHAN, AND I MUST GO.

ALAS! YOU WILL NOT GIVE IN. I SHALL HAVE LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATIONS PREPARED.

ARMED THUS WITH THE KHAN'S OFFICIAL PROTECTION, HIUEN TSANG REACHED SAMARKAND AND MET THE KING THERE.

AS THEY WERE CONVERSING —

HELP!

HELP, O KING!

WHAT'S THE MATTER?

THESE MEN WON'T LET US DO OUR WORSHIP AND WANT TO BURN US ALIVE. SAVE US, O KING!

GUARDS! CATCH THOSE MEN. FAST!

WHEN THE CULPRITS WERE BROUGHT TO THE KING —

CUT OFF THE HANDS OF THESE WICKED MEN!

WAIT, O KING.

THEY ARE WICKED MEN, O MASTER.

I KNOW, BUT SPARE THEIR LIVES THIS ONCE, AND THEY SHALL LEAD VIRTUOUS LIVES HENCEFORTH.

YES, WE PROMISE.

HIUEN TSANG THUS EARNED THE KING'S RESPECT AND THE MEN'S GRATITUDE.

THEY RESUMED THE JOURNEY. AT ONE PLACE —

LOOK AT THOSE RUINS, MASTER!

YES, I NOTICED. THEY ARE RUINS OF A STUPA AND I SHALL HAVE THE STRUCTURE REPAIRED.

HIUEN TSANG SET TO WORK IMMEDIATELY AND HAD THE STUPA REPAIRED.

HE THEN HELD AN ASSEMBLY OF THE LOCAL MONKS.

I HAVE HAD THE STUPA AND MONASTERIES REPAIRED. IT IS FOR YOU NOW TO USE THEM FOR OBSERVING THE LAW OF THE BUDDHA.

I MUST FOLLOW HIS ADVICE.

HAVING REFORMED THE PEOPLE OF THEIR EVIL CUSTOMS, HIUEN TSANG PROCEEDED ONWARDS AND CROSSING MANY MOUNTAINS AND LANDS, REACHED BAMIYAN IN AFGHANISTAN.

AFTER LEAVING BAMIYAN, HIUEN TSANG ENCOUNTERED A SNOW-STORM. HE LOST HIS WAY.

WITH GREAT DIFFICULTY HE FOUND HIS BEARINGS AND ARRIVED IN INDIA AT NAGARAHARA, WHERE THE SKULL-BONE OF BUDDHA WAS ENSHRINED.

HERE IS SOME INCENSE, SIR. MAKE A PASTE, SPREAD IT ON THIS SILKEN PIECE OF CLOTH AND PRESS IT ON THE BONE.

AS HIUEN TSANG FOLLOWED THESE INSTRUCTIONS —

LOOK! THERE'S A PICTURE EMERGING!

IT'S A BODHI TREE!

THE MONK GUARDING THE STUPA WAS OVERJOYED.

IT'S A VERY RARE OCCURRENCE, SIR. IT SHOWS YOU HAVE TRUE WISDOM.

AFTER THIS EXALTING EXPERIENCE, HIUEN TSANG RESUMED HIS JOURNEY INTO THE INTERIOR OF INDIA. SUDDENLY —

HALT! WHO ARE YOU? WHERE ARE YOU GOING?

I AM A PILGRIM. I WISH TO WORSHIP THE SHADOW OF THE BUDDHA.

THE ROAD IS INFESTED WITH ROBBERS. ARE YOU NOT AFRAID?

AFRAID? OF WHOM, THE ROBBERS? NO, INDEED. THEY ARE ONLY HUMAN. CAN THEY BE WORSE THAN WILD ANIMALS?

MOVED BY HIUEN TSANG'S WORDS, THE ROBBERS SPARED HIM AND HIS COMPANIONS AND TOOK THEM TO A FAMOUS CAVE.

HERE, O MASTER, WILL YOU SEE THE SHADOW OF THE BUDDHA.

INSIDE THE CAVE, HIUEN TSANG PRAYED FOR SEVERAL HOURS.

ALL THESE HOURS SPENT IN MEDITATION AND WORSHIP, AND STILL NO SIGN OF THE SHADOW! BLESS ME, O BUDDHA, LET ME BEHOLD THY SHADOW.

THERE WAS NO SIGN OF THE SHADOW.

TAKE NOT TO HEART MY SHORTCOMINGS, LORD. HAVE MERCY ON ME, O ENLIGHTENED ONE!

HIUEN TSANG BEGAN TO RECITE THE SUTRAS IN PRAISE OF THE BUDDHA. FOR SEVERAL HOURS HE PRAYED WITH INTENSE DEVOTION. SUDDENLY —

BLESSED I AM!

THE ROBBERS, SEEING THE PHENOMENON WERE AMAZED.

FORGIVE US, O MASTER. BLESS US WITH YOUR WORDS OF WISDOM.

GIVE UP YOUR EVIL DEEDS, SAID THE BUDDHA, FOR THEY ARE THE CAUSE OF SORROW AND REBIRTH.

CONTINUING THE JOURNEY, HIUEN TSANG CAME TO GANDHARA AND THEN THE BANK OF SINDHU.

AFTER CROSSING THE RIVER THEY CAME TO TAKSHASHILA, A FAMOUS CENTRE OF LEARNING AND WORSHIP. FROM HERE HIUEN TSANG WENT TO KASHMIR. THE KING AND HIS MEN RECEIVED HIM WITH DUE HONOUR.

AT THE ROYAL COURT —

O MASTER! STAY IN MY KINGDOM AWHILE AND CONFER WITH MY MEN OF LEARNING.

I WILL, O KING, WITH PLEASURE. BUT I HAVE NO ORIGINAL BOOKS TO READ FROM.

DO NOT WORRY ON THAT ACCOUNT. I SHALL HAVE TWENTY MEN COPY THE SACRED BOOKS AND SHASTRAS.

VERY KIND OF YOU, O KING.

THE KING'S HEAD-PRIEST WAS THE GROUP LEADER AT THE DISCUSSION.

O GREAT MASTER FROM CHINA, I SHALL EXPLAIN TO YOU THE SHASTRAS I KNOW.

I AM ALL EARS, HOLY ONE.

FOR TWO YEARS HIUEN TSANG STUDIED BUDDHIST PHILOSOPHY AND HAD SUTRAS AND SHASTRAS COPIED TO TAKE BACK TO CHINA.

HE THEN TOOK HIS LEAVE OF THE KING AND JOURNEYED AHEAD.

AS HE WAS NEARING CHINABHUKTI ON THE BEAS—

HALT! GIVE UP ALL YOUR BELONGINGS!

ROBBERS!

THE ROBBERS TOOK NOT ONLY THE BELONGINGS OF HIUEN TSANG AND HIS COMPANIONS BUT ALSO THE CLOTHES THEY WORE.

THEY ARE NOT LOOKING. LET'S RUN AWAY.

AS HIUEN TSANG AND HIS COMPANION ESCAPED—

HEY, LOOK! THEY HAVE ESCAPED!

LET'S CATCH THEM. THEY MUST BE KILLED.

HIUEN TSANG AND HIS COMPANIONS JUMPED INTO A MARSH COVERED WITH MATTED CREEPERS.

THEY SWAM THROUGH THE MARSH AND WHEN ON LAND AGAIN, FLED AT A GREAT SPEED TOWARDS A NEARBY VILLAGE.

ON THE VILLAGE OUTSKIRTS —

HELP, HELP! WE HAVE BEEN ROBBED AND THE BRIGANDS ARE STILL AFTER US. THEY'LL KILL US!

THAT'S TERRIBLE! WHAT SHALL WE DO NOW?

LET US GO TO YOUR VILLAGE AND SEEK HELP. BE QUICK!

YES, I WILL. COME WITH ME, QUICK.

IN THE VILLAGE —

WHAT'S THE MATTER?

WHY IS HE BLOWING THE CONCH SHELL?

TAKE UP ARMS, WHATEVER WEAPONS YOU HAVE, FRIENDS! WE ARE BEING PURSUED BY ROBBERS!

IT WAS A BAND OF ABOUT EIGHTY MEN THAT CHARGED AGAINST THE ROBBERS.

WE'RE OUTNUMBERED! LET'S FLEE!

AS THE ROBBERS DISAPPEARED INTO THE FOREST, HIUEN TSANG AND THE VILLAGERS RESCUED HIS MEN FROM THE TANGLED CREEPERS.

LET US SHARE AMONG OURSELVES ALL THE CLOTHING WE HAVE.

O MASTER! HOW CAN YOU REMAIN SMILING EVEN AFTER SUCH A HORRIFIC EXPERIENCE?

THE GREATEST GIFT FRIEND, IS LIFE ITSELF WHY GRIEVE OVER A FEW GOODS AND GARMENTS ?

YOUR WISDOM IS GREAT, O MASTER.

THE NEWS OF THE INCIDENT TRAVELLED FAR.

FRIENDS ! HIUEN TSANG IS A GREAT SCHOLAR AND THE ROBBERS HAVE DISGRACED HIM. WE MUST HELP HIM.

YES, LET'S GIVE HIM THESE CLOTHES AND PRO-VISIONS.

CLOTHED THUS IN INDIAN GARMENTS, HIUEN TSANG PROCEEDED FURTHER AND CAME TO GANGOTRI WHERE HE SAW THE SOURCE OF THE RIVER GANGA.

VISITING CITY AFTER CITY TO STUDY THE SHASTRAS, HIUEN TSANG ARRIVED AT PRAYAGA. HERE AT THE SANGAM, HE BOARDED A BOAT.

AS THE BOAT WAS BEING ROWED DOWN THE RIVER, IT WAS ATTACKED BY ROBBERS.

THE ROBBERS OVERPOWERED HIUEN TSANG AND HIS MEN.

THEY TOWED HIS BOAT TO THE RIVER-BANK.

TAKE OFF YOUR CLOTHES, QUICK! I WANT ALL YOUR JEWELLERY.

CHIEF, LOOK AT HIM.

I SEE WHAT YOU MEAN. HE IS OF NOBLE APPEARANCE AND BODILY STRENGTH. HE IS FIT TO BE SACRIFICED TO GODDESS DURGA.

IF YOU SAY SO, SIR. BUT I CAME HERE SEEKING THE LAW OF THE BUDDHA. IF MY TASK IS NOT DONE ON YOUR ACCOUNT, GREAT MISFORTUNE WILL SURELY COME YOUR WAY.

BUT THE ROBBERS DID NOT LISTEN TO HIUEN TSANG OR THE PLEAS OF HIS COMPANIONS. THEY TOOK HIM ASHORE AND TIED HIM UP AT THE SACRIFICAL ALTAR.

HOLD IT! I WISH TO SAY MY LAST PRAYERS.

WELL, GO AHEAD, YOU HAVEN'T TOO LONG TO LIVE.

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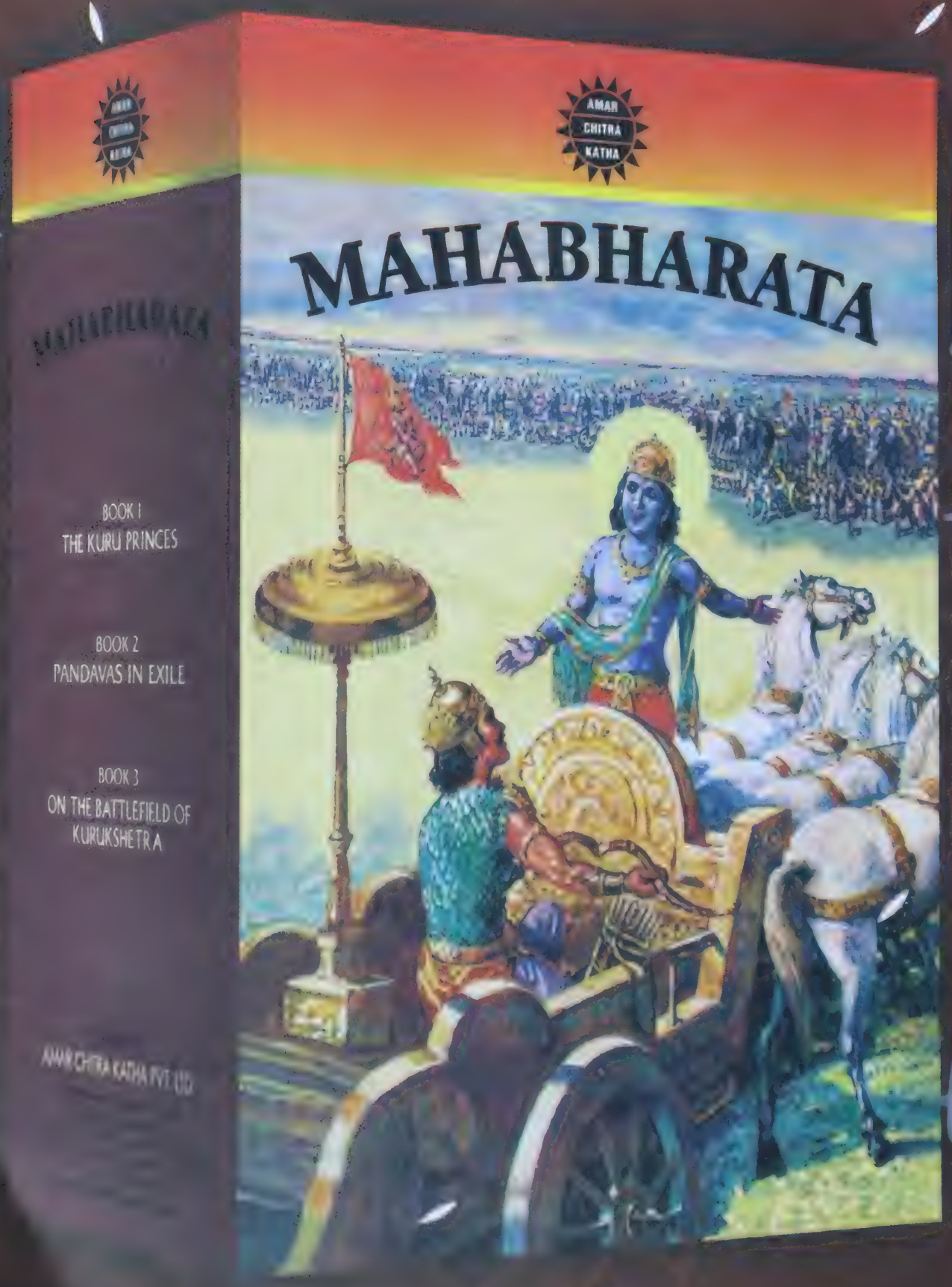

O BODHISATTVA! BLESS ME THAT I MAY BE REBORN IN THIS LAND TO PAY REVERENCE TO YOU AND TO THE EXCELLENT LAW, AND MAY I BE REBORN TO CONVERT THESE MEN...

BEFORE HE COULD FINISH, A SUDDEN GALE SWEPT OVER THE LAND AND THE RIVER.

THE ROBBERS WERE TERRIFIED.

WHO IS THIS SHRAMANA? WHERE DOES HE COME FROM?

HE IS A RENOWNED SCHOLAR FROM CHINA, COME IN SEARCH OF THE LAW. IF YOU KILL HIM...

...YOU WILL INCUR THE WRATH OF THE SPIRITS OF THE HEAVEN. HASTEN NOW TO REPENT!

THE ROBBERS FELL AT THE FEET OF HIUEN TSANG.

FORGIVE US, O MASTER, WE HAVE SINNED. WE PRAY YOU ACCEPT OUR REPENTANCE.

THE BRIGANDS FLUNG THEIR WEAPONS INTO THE RIVER AND RETURNED TO HIUEN TSANG AND HIS COMPANIONS THEIR POSSESSIONS.

FURTHER ON HIS WAY, HIUEN TSANG SAW A STRANGE SIGHT AT RAMAGRAMA.

EVEN WILD ANIMALS REVERE THE BUDDHA!

THEN, AT GAYA, WHERE THE BUDDHA HAD ATTAINED ENLIGHTENMENT, THE PILGRIM WORSHIPPED THE BODHI TREE.

HOW EVIL MY DEEDS HAVE BEEN! WHEN WILL I ATTAIN DELIVERANCE?

LATER, WHEN HE ARRIVED AT NALANDA, THE FAMED CENTRE OF BUDDHIST LEARNING, THE CHIEF PRIEST SHEELABHADRA GAVE HIM A WARM RECEPTION.

WELCOME, O GREAT PRIEST FROM CHINA.

O HONOURED ONE, I WISH TO BE YOUR DISCIPLE AND STUDY THE SACRED TEXTS.

FOR HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN TRAVELLING?

THREE YEARS NOW IN SEARCH OF LEARNING.

AH, THAT MEANS YOU ARE THE ONE. THREE GODS INFORMED ME IN MY DREAM ABOUT YOUR ARRIVAL. WITH GREAT PLEASURE I TAKE YOU AS MY DISCIPLE.

IN NALANDA HIUEN TSANG STUDIED THE SACRED TEXTS FOR FIFTEEN MONTHS AND WROTE A BOOK HIMSELF. HE WAS TREATED WITH GREAT RESPECT.

HE THEN WENT TO TAMRALIPTI, THE FAMOUS SEAPORT.

I HEAR THAT ONE CAN TAKE A BOAT HERE TO SIMHALA. THERE ARE MANY EXPERTS ON YOGA SHASTRA THERE.

DON'T GO THERE, O MASTER. THE COUNTRY IS IN TURMOIL AND THE VOYAGE IS DIFFICULT.

TAKING THE ADVICE, HIUEN TSANG TURNED BACK AND WORKED HIS WAY THROUGH KALINGA* AND DRAVIDA DESHA.†

WHAT IS THIS SWEET SMELL PERVADING THE AIR? IT SEEMS TO COME FROM THAT JUNGLE.

LET US GO THERE AND EXPLORE.

INSIDE THE JUNGLE—

OH, LOOK AT THOSE SNAKES!

IT IS SANDALWOOD AND IT IS COOL, SIR. THE SNAKES COME TO ESCAPE THE HEAT. THEY WILL GO AWAY IN WINTER.

THEN, TURNING NORTH-WARDS AGAIN, HE REACHED MAHARASHTRA WHERE THE CHALUKYA KING PULAKESHI II WAS RULING.

THOSE ELEPHANTS LOOK WILD WITH EXCITEMENT. WHAT IS GOING ON?

THOSE HAVE BEEN GIVEN LIQUOR, SIR. KING PULAKESHI IS MARCHING AGAINST THE ?ALLAVAS OF KANCHEEPURAM.

THE ARMY LOOKS MIGHTY. THE KING MUST BE VERY POWERFUL.

OF COURSE HE IS, SIR. HE DEFEATED THE MIGHTY HARSHA OF THE NORTH.

* MODERN ORISSA † SOUTH INDIA

AFTER TRAVELLING OVER SIND AND MULTAN, HIUEN TSANG REVISITED NALANDA WHERE HE STUDIED THE VEDAS, ASTRONOMY, GEOGRAPHY, MEDICINE AND ARITHMETIC.

ONE DAY A MESSENGER FROM KING HARSHA ARRIVED.

THE KING WISHES TO HOLD A CONFERENCE OF RELIGIOUS SCHOLARS. SEND FOUR OF YOUR MOST LEARNED MEN.

CERTAINLY. HIUEN TSANG, WOULD YOU LIKE TO REPRESENT OUR MONASTERY?

OF COURSE. I HAVE ACQUIRED THE NECESSARY KNOWLEDGE FOR THE PURPOSE. THE HONOUR OF MY COUNTRY IS AT STAKE.

GOOD. WE SHALL INFORM KING HARSHA OF YOUR CONSENT.

MANY DAYS PASSED. ONE DAY AN ASTROLOGER CAME TO THE MONASTERY.

I HAVE ACCUMULATED SO MANY BOOKS AND IMAGES, BUT MY THOUGHTS CONTINUOUSLY RETURN TO MY HOME COUNTRY. WILL I EVER GET BACK THERE?

HAVE NO ANXIETY, SIR. YOU WILL REACH WITHOUT ANY TROUBLE.

THE MONKS OF NALANDA BECAME ANXIOUS.

BHARATAVARSHA IS THE PLACE WHERE THE BUDDHA WAS BORN. WHY DO YOU WISH TO LEAVE AFTER HAVING COME SO FAR?

THE BUDDHA DESIGNED THE LAW FOR ALL THE WORLD. HE WOULD NOT LIKE A GREAT SECTION OF MANKIND REMAINING UNENLIGHTENED. I MUST GO AND SPREAD THE MESSAGE OF THE LAW AMONG THEM.

DO NOT GO, O MASTER. MEN IN THAT COUNTRY LIVE IN THE DARKNESS OF IGNORANCE.

TELL ME, FRIEND, WHY DOES THE SUN RISE OVER YOUR COUNTRY?

TO DISPEL THE GLOOM.

FOR THE VERY SAME REASON, I WISH TO RETURN TO CHINA.

IN DESPERATION, THE PRIESTS APPROACHED SHEELABHADRA. HE ASKED HIUEN TSANG—

WHY HAVE YOU COME TO THIS RESOLVE?

IT IS IMPOSSIBLE NOT TO REGARD INDIA WITH AFFECTION. I HAVE SEEN ALL THE SACRED PLACES, STUDIED ALL THAT I WISHED TO, BUT...

...I MUST GET BACK AND SPEAK TO MY COUNTRYMEN ABOUT WHAT I HAVE LEARNED HERE, SO THAT THEY TOO WILL REMEMBER YOU AND YOUR COUNTRY WITH AFFECTION AND GRATITUDE. I CANNOT PROLONG MY STAY HERE.

SHEELABHADRA WAS OVERJOYED.

THESE ARE THOUGHTS WORTHY OF A BODHISATTVA, AND I FULLY APPRECIATE YOUR FEELINGS. I SHALL ARRANGE FOR YOUR JOURNEY AND EXPLAIN TO MY FRIENDS HERE WHY YOU WISH TO LEAVE.

JUST THEN —

O HONOURED ONE, THE KING OF KAMARUPA, WHO IS YOUR DEVOTED DISCIPLE, HAS SENT ME HERE TO INVITE THE GREAT PRIEST FROM CHINA. PLEASE LET HIM COME WITH ME.

WE HAVE ALREADY GIVEN OUR WORD TO KING HARSHA. WHAT SHALL WE DO NOW?

HMM, IT'S A PROBLEM. WELL, WE'LL TELL HIM HIUEN TSANG CAN'T COME BECAUSE HE IS ANXIOUS TO RETURN TO CHINA SOON.

AFTER SOME DAYS—

I HAVE COME AGAIN, O HOLY ONE. LET THE MASTER VISIT KAMARUPA IF ONLY FOR A SHORT WHILE, OUR KING IS VERY EAGER TO MEET HIM.

I SAID NO.

WELL, THEN, HE HAS GIVEN THIS LETTER FOR YOU.

SHEELABHADRA READ THE LETTER FROM THE KING OF KAMARUPA—

"...I AM YOUR DEVOUT DISCIPLE AND YOU PREVENT ME FROM MEETING THE LEARNED PRIEST FROM CHINA. IS THIS HOW YOU EXPECT THE MESSAGE OF THE BUDDHA TO SPREAD? DO NOT AROUSE MY ANGER, OR I SHALL SEND MY ARMY AND HAVE THE MONASTERY REDUCED TO DUST...

YOU HAD BETTER GO, O MASTER, OR ELSE EVIL DEEDS WILL BE DONE.

VERY WELL, O HOLY ONE.

HIUEN TSANG STAYED AT THE ROYAL COURT OF KAMARUPA FOR A MONTH. ONE DAY—

I COME FROM KING HARSHA. THE MASTER MUST VISIT HIM AS PROMISED.

TELL THE KING, HE MAY TAKE MY HEAD BUT HE CANNOT TAKE AWAY THE MASTER FROM ME.

THE MESSENGER WENT AWAY, BUT CAME BACK IN A FEW DAYS' TIME.

KING HARSHA SAYS THEN TO SEND YOUR HEAD.

OH! I HAVE BEEN IMPRUDENT. I MUST MAKE AMENDS.

HE MARCHED WITH HIUEN TSANG UPTO THE BANKS OF THE GANGA WHERE HARSHA WAS CAMPING. HARSHA, WITH HIS SISTER RAJYASHREE, CAME TO MEET HIUEN TSANG IN THE LATTER'S CAMP.

I HAVE BEEN INVITING YOU TO MEET ME ALL THESE DAYS. WHY DID YOU NOT COME EARLIER?

I CAME HERE TO STUDY, O KING. HOW COULD I HAVE COME AND MET YOU TILL I HAD FINISHED MY STUDIES?

MAY I TAKE A LOOK AT THE LEARNED BOOK YOU HAVE WRITTEN?

CERTAINLY. HERE IT IS.

BOTH HARSHA AND HIS SISTER RAJYASHREE READ THE BOOK AND ADMIRED HIUEN TSANG'S KNOWLEDGE AND WISDOM.

LATER, ON HARSHA'S ORDERS —

ALL THE SCHOLARS OF THE LAND ARE INVITED TO ASSEMBLE IN KANNAUJ TO EXAMINE THIS BOOK, TO CONFER WITH EACH OTHER AND TO MEET THE GREAT MASTER FROM CHINA.

FIVE THOUSAND PRIESTS OF ALL SCHOOLS OF THINKING ASSEMBLED AT A HALL SPECIALLY BUILT FOR THE CONFERENCE. THIS WAS THE FAMOUS BUDDHIST ASSEMBLY OF 643 A.D.

HIUEN TSANG GOT UP TO SPEAK.

I HAVE GREAT HONOUR IN INITIATING THIS DISCUSSION ON MAHA-YANA. IF ANYBODY IS ABLE TO REFUTE MY PROPOSITION, I OFFER MY HEAD AS RE-COMPENSE.

NOBODY CAME FOR FIVE DAYS. THEN —

MAHARAJA, THE HEENA-YANA SCHOLARS, UNABLE TO RESPOND TO THE MASTER'S CHALLENGE, ARE PLOTTING TO KILL HIM.

THIS IS DEPLORABLE. MAKE A PROCLAMATION IN MY NAME...

THE NEXT DAY —

"THE KING DECLARES THAT WHOEVER ATTEMPTS TO HURT THE MASTER SHALL BE BEHEADED. BUT ALL WHO DESIRE TO PROFIT BY HIS LEARNING NEED NOT HAVE ANY FEAR".

WHEN NOBODY CAME FOR EIGHTEEN DAYS —

YOU HAVE TRIUM-PHED, O MASTER. PLEASE ACCEPT MY HUMBLE GIFT.

I DO NOT WISH TO ACQUIRE WORLDLY POSSESSIONS.

HAIL THE MASTER!

HAIL MAHAYANA-DEVA!

HAIL MOKSHADEVA!

HIUEN TSANG BEGGED TO TAKE LEAVE OF HARSHA. BUT —

IN A FEW DAYS I SHALL HAVE A CEREMONY AT WHICH I WILL GIVE AWAY ALL MY POSSESSIONS TO THE NEEDY. I WOULD BE HAPPY IF YOU COULD STAY AND WITNESS IT.

WITH PLEASURE, O KING. IF YOU DO NOT GRUDGE GIVING AWAY ALL YOUR WEALTH, HOW CAN I GRUDGE A FEW DAYS' DELAY?

THE CEREMONY WAS HELD AT PRAYAGA. THE EMPEROR DONATED GENEROUSLY. THE CEREMONY WENT ON FOR MONTHS.

AFTER ABOUT THREE MONTHS OF GIVING CHARITY—

I HAVE NOTHING MORE TO GIVE YOU. TAKE THIS GARMENT OF MINE.

MAY THE LORD BLESS YOU, O KING.

AFTER SOME MONTHS, ONCE AGAIN, HIUEN TSANG REQUESTED LEAVE OF KING HARSHA TO GO.

I AM UNABLE TO PERSUADE YOU TO STAY. WHAT WOULD YOU REQUIRE FOR THE JOURNEY?

NOTHING.

NOTHING? IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO PERMIT YOU TO GO THUS.

ALL RIGHT. I SHALL TAKE FROM YOU THAT CAPE TO PROTECT ME FROM RAIN WHILE I AM ON THE ROAD.

THE KING WENT WITH HIUEN TSANG FOR SEVERAL KILOMETRES TO SEE HIM OFF.

GOOD-BYE, O MASTER. REMEMBER US AND OUR LAND. I HAVE WRITTEN TO ALL THE KINGS ON YOUR WAY TO LOOK AFTER YOU.

THANK YOU, O KING. MY HEART IS FILLED WITH SORROW AS I TAKE LEAVE OF YOU.

TAKE CARE OF THOSE BOOKS AND IMAGES.

ALL ALONG, HIUEN TSANG'S JOURNEY, PEOPLE GREETED HIM WITH JOY AND RESPECT.

HE HALTED AT SEVERAL PLACES TO HOLD DISCOURSES WITH LEARNED MEN.

WHILE CROSSING THE MOUNTAINS THEY ENCOUNTERED ROBBERS.

WE HAVE NOTHING BUT SACRED BOOKS AND HOLY RELICS. PLEASE LET US OFF.

ALL RIGHT, PASS.

WHEN THEY CAME TO THE RIVER SINDHU—

THE RIVER IS IN SPATE, MASTER. THE ELEPHANTS WON'T PASS THROUGH. WHAT SHOULD WE DO?

PUT ALL THE PRECIOUS ITEMS IN BOATS AND LET US CROSS THE RIVER.

WHILE THEY CROSSED THE RIVER—
HELP!

YOU GET BACK TO INDIA AND COPY OUT THE FIFTY BOOKS THAT FELL INTO THE RIVER. GET THEM BACK SAFELY TO CHINA.

TRAVELLING OVER DIFFICULT MOUNTAINOUS REGIONS...

...WITNESSING STRANGE SIGHTS...

...PASSING VAST EXPANSES OF DESERTS...

...HIUEN TSANG ARRIVED IN CHINA WHERE THE EMPEROR HIMSELF RECEIVED HIM WITH DUE HONOUR.

HE PRESENTED TO THE EMPEROR THE TREASURES HE HAD BROUGHT FROM INDIA.

O MASTER! BE A MINISTER AT MY COURT.

NO. I MUST ACCOMPLISH THE MISSION I HAVE UNDERTAKEN.

HIUEN TSANG RETIRED TO A MONASTERY AND BEGAN HIS WORK OF TRANSLATING THE TEXTS HE HAD BROUGHT FROM INDIA.

HE HAD A STUPA CONSTRUCTED IN WHICH THE BOOKS AND IMAGES WERE KEPT IN SAFE CUSTODY.

HE DIED A CONTENTED MAN, HAVING TRANSLATED 74 DISTINCT WORKS IN 1,335 CHAPTERS. THE EMPEROR HAD A TOWER BUILT IN HIS HONOUR OVER HIS MORTAL REMAINS.

THE ACK QUIZ

EPICS & MYTHOLOGY

1 Which god rides a crow?

2 Name Surya's charioteer.

3 Who are the two brothers in the image?

4 Which kingdom are they fighting for?

5 Which of these two brothers was an ally of Rama?

6 What is the name of Indra's weapon?

7 What is the name of his elephant?

8 What is the name of Indra's capital?

9 Who is the guru of the asuras?

10 The gods and asuras churned the ocean for _____.

ANSWERS

1. Shani 2. Aruna 3. Vali and Sugriva 4. Kishkindha 5. Sugriva 6. Vajra 7. Airavata 8. Amaravati 9. Shukracharya 10. Amrit (Divine Nectar)

THE ACK QUIZ
EPICS & MYTHOLOGY

1. What is Parashuramas weapon?
2. Who were Krishnas birth parents?
3. Who is the person in the image?
4. Who was his mother?
5. Who was he married to?
6. Who is the woman in the image?
7. She is also known as Jahnavi. Which sage is she named after?
8. Which king brought her down to earth?
9. Manthara was the maid of which queen?
10. Who is Jatayus brother?

ANSWERS

1. Axe 2. Devaki and Vasudeva 3. Abhimanyu 4. Subhadra 5. Uttara 6. Ganga 7. Jahnu 8. Bhagirath 9. Kaikeyi 10. Sampati

WHICH OF THE ACKs HAVE YOU STILL NOT READ?

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Indra And Shachi
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Eknath
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Guru Arjan
Guru Gobind Singh
Guru Har Gobind
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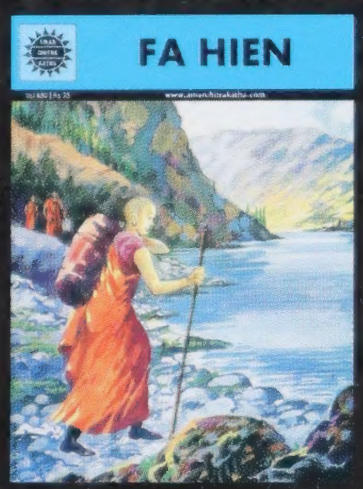

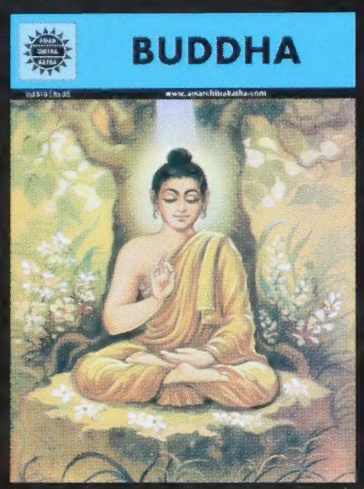

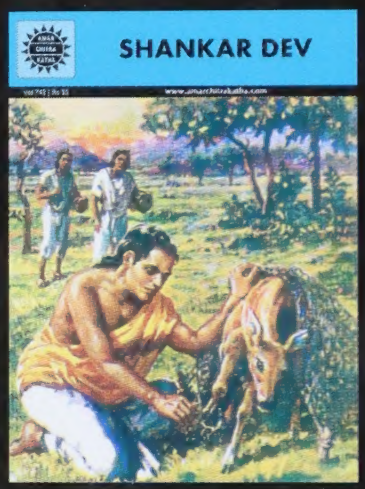

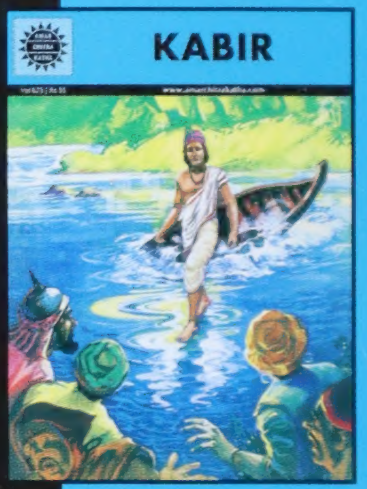

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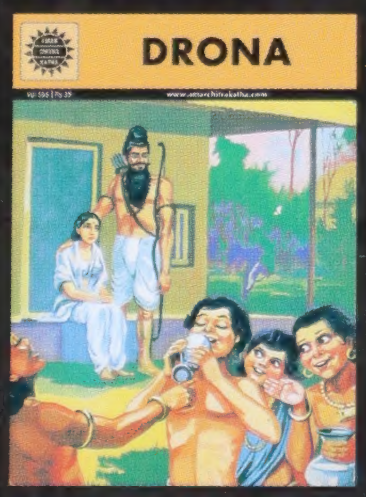

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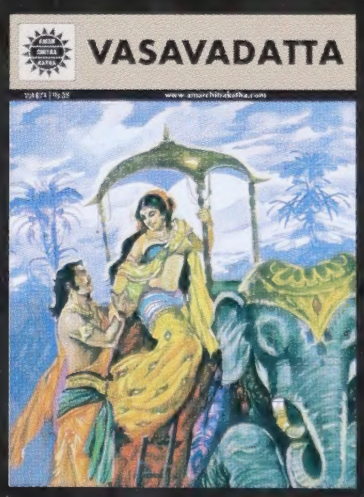

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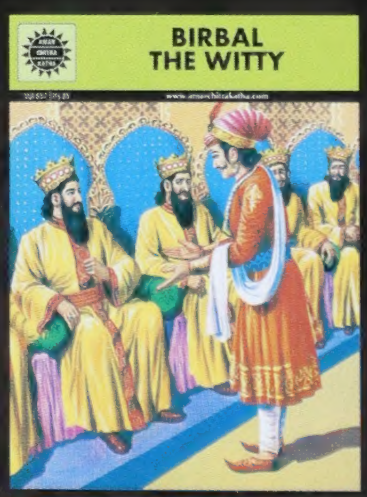

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